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Rural Development marks Earth Day with Recovery Act project in Baileyton

BAILEYTON, Tenn., April 20, 2010 — Planting trees is a traditional way to celebrate Earth Day. Over the years the trees grow up to do many good things for the environment; filter water runoff before pollutants slip into streams, supply the oxygen we breathe and even reduce energy bills by cooling homes and businesses with their shade.

Wastewater treatment does not as quickly come to mind on Earth Day.

Today in Baileyton, however, trees and wastewater treatment shared a stage as USDA Rural Development State Director Bobby Goode joined Mayor Thomas Casteel and other local leaders marked the 40th anniversary of Earth Day by planting trees and announcing federal funding for needed improvements to the community's wastewater treatment plant.

"Thousands of USDA employees and tens of thousands of other volunteers from the Capitol in D.C. to Baileyton, Tennessee and across rural America are taking action to improve our nation's natural resources, especially a clean, abundant water supply," said Goode.

"Every day, USDA Rural Development helps clean up wastewater in rural communities to keep the fish biting and swimming holes more than just a story we tell our kids."

After announcing federal Recovery Act funding of \$725,000 for needed improvements to the water treatment system, Casteel led the group across the street from town hall to Baileyton Elementary School where five oak saplings were planted near the playground. The group then planted another 20 young oaks and Tulip Poplars along the site of a future walking path being developed adjacent to the elementary school.

Rural Development funding through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (Recovery Act) includes a low-interest loan of \$305,000 and a grant of \$420,000. The State is providing a federal Community Development Block Grant of \$225,000 to complete the project.

According to Casteel, "Upgrades will double the capacity of the current waste treatment plant to meet the growing demand in the area and bring the facility into full compliance with state regulations."

Improvements announced include modifications to the aeration basin and digesters; and the addition of a secondary clarifier basin, an additional blower and a new effluent pump station.

Goode also announced a second USDA grant of \$14,000 for needed police first responder equipment for Baileyton. The gear and communications equipment will outfit a new cruiser the city purchased late last year.

"Whatever the emergency our first responders deserve to be properly equipped to save lives and protect property." Said Goode.

Rural Development community programs finance construction or improvements to essential services like reliable access to clean water, wastewater treatment, healthcare, education, job training and first responder facilities. Loan-guarantees encourage private lenders to expand the availability of affordable financing in rural communities. Direct loans and grants create sound financial opportunities for local governments to meet essential infrastructure needs. Funding for water projects targets areas with populations of less than 10,000.

Others participating in the event included Baileyton Town Recorder Barbara Tilson, Baileyton Police Chief Dale Dobbs, Jr., W&W Engineering President Cathy Walden, RD Area Director Charles Brooks and staff Allen Hawk, Louis Trivette, Bobbie Grim and Christa Graybeal.

The Recovery Act is designed to jumpstart the nation's economy, create or save millions of jobs and put a down payment on addressing long-neglected challenges so our country can thrive in the 21st century. The Act includes measures to modernize our nation's infrastructure, enhance energy independence, expand educational opportunities, preserve and improve affordable health care, provide tax relief, and protect those in greatest need.

More information about USDA's Recovery Act efforts is available at www.usda.gov/recovery.

USDA Rural Development invests in jobs, businesses, community infrastructure, homeownership and affordable rental housing in rural communities. Last year Rural Development assisted more than 866,000 Tennessee families and businesses with more than \$619 million in financial assistance through affordable loans, loan guarantees and grants.

For more information on Rural Development programs available in Greene County contact the Rural Development Area Office in Greeneville at 423-638-4771 ext. 4, toll free at (800) 342-3149 ext. 1490 or visit us online at www.rurdev.usda.gov/tn.

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